

HOW TO...
PAGE 150

HOW IT WORKS
PAGE 160

UPGRADE
WORKSHOP
PAGE 162

ADVANCED
WINDOWS
PAGE 164

HOW TO...

Create a desktop toolbar

Are you struggling to make sense of your messy desktop? Rod Lawton explains how to keep all those handy shortcuts accessible but out of sight

Frequently used programs, as well as frequently accessed folders and files, are quicker to access from a shortcut on the Windows desktop. But after a while, the Windows desktop begins to look a mess. You could move these shortcuts to the taskbar; the quickest way is to drag the icon straight on to the Quick Launch area. However, it doesn't take long to fill this up. Unless you increase your taskbar's height so that it has two rows of buttons, or even three, there's not much more you can do – or is there? Windows XP still has the custom toolbars feature of previous editions but, like so many other useful Windows tricks, this feature seems to have been forgotten over time.

1 Open Windows Explorer, right-click on a clear area in the right-hand pane and select New, Folder. Give the folder a name; we called ours My Toolbar. Move all the shortcuts, documents, applications and folders that you want on the custom toolbar into the folder. Shortcuts are easiest since you won't have to reorganise your hard disk, but you can mix real folders, files and shortcuts.

2 Right-click on a blank area of the taskbar. From the menu that appears, choose Toolbars, New

Toolbar. Navigate to the folder you created in Step 1. When you've chosen your folder, Windows creates a new area on the taskbar with the same name as your folder. If you click on this, a pop-up menu lists the folder contents. You can open and launch any of these just by selecting them.

3 If this doesn't work, right-click the taskbar and untick Lock the Taskbar before trying again. You can pull the toolbar free of the taskbar and position it anywhere on the screen. Move the cursor over the toolbar. Click and hold the left mouse button down. The cursor changes into a four-headed arrow. Drag the cursor over the desktop and let go. It will appear as a floating toolbar.

4 Floating toolbars can get in the way. Instead, drag the toolbar to the edge of the screen. When the palette gets close to the screen edge, it will automatically stick to the side. There are just two more things that we need to do in order to make it behave the way that we want. First you need to right-click on the toolbar and select Always on top, so the toolbar isn't obscured by application windows. Then you need to select Auto-Hide, so that when it isn't being used the toolbar slides out of the way.

